

CLAIMS:

1. A method for providing service data to medical diagnostic systems, the method comprising the steps of:

5 (a) generating a diagnostic system service request for a designated diagnostic system coupled to an internal network of a medical diagnostic facility;

(b) transmitting the request to a remote service provider over an external network via a data communication control system coupled to a plurality of diagnostic systems over the internal network;

(c) receiving and processing the request at the remote service provider;

10 (d) transmitting a response from the remote service provider in response to the request.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein the response is transmitted to the data communications control system.

3. The method of claim 1, comprising the further step of transmitting the response to the designated diagnostic system via the internal network.

4. The method of claim 1, wherein the diagnostic system service request is generated at the designated diagnostic system.

5. The method of claim 4, wherein the diagnostic system service request is generated via an interface routine provided on the data communications control system.

6. The method of claim 5, wherein the interface routine includes a web browser application.

7. The method of claim 1, wherein the service request is generated at the data communications control system.

8. The method of claim 1, wherein the service request includes at least data identifying the designated diagnostic system.

5 9. The method of claim 8, comprising the further step of accessing operational data from the designated diagnostic system in response to the service request.

10 10. The method of claim 1, wherein the service request is transmitted to the remote service provider via a first data communications medium and the response is transmitted to the medical diagnostic facility via a second data communications medium different from the first medium.

15 11. The method of claim 10, wherein the first medium includes a wide area network link.

12. The method of claim 10, wherein the second medium includes a satellite link.

20 13. The method of claim 10, wherein the response is transmitted directly to a diagnostic system.

25 14. The method of claim 1, comprising the further steps of placing the service request in a queue, and transmitting the service request in accordance with an established schedule.

30 15. The method of claim 1, wherein the response includes service data for addressing an operational problem of the designated diagnostic system, and wherein the method includes storing the service data for download to the designated diagnostic system.

16. A method for servicing a plurality of medical diagnostic systems, the method comprising the steps of:

(a) generating a service request for designated diagnostic system of a plurality of diagnostic systems coupled to an internal network of a medical diagnostic facility;

(b) accessing system data useful in addressing the service request;

5 (c) transmitting the service request to a remote service provider via a data communications control system;

(d) processing the request at the remote service provider; and

(e) transmitting a service response from the remote service provider to the data communications control system.

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17. The method of claim 16, wherein the service request is generated at the designated diagnostic system.

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18. The method of claim 16, wherein the system data is stored at the diagnostic system.

19. The method of claim 18, wherein the system data is accessed by the data communications control system and transmitted to the remote service provider.

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20. The method of claim 19, wherein the system data is transmitted with the service request.

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21. The method of claim 19, wherein the system data is transmitted after the service request and in response to a prompt from the remote service provider.

22. The method of claim 16, wherein the service request and the response are transmitted via different data communications media.

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23. The method of claim 16, comprising the further step of forwarding the response to the designated diagnostic system via the internal network.

24. The method of claim 16, wherein the diagnostic systems include at least two imaging systems of different modalities.

25. A system for providing remote service to a plurality of networked medical diagnostic systems, the system comprising:

a plurality of medical diagnostic systems coupled to an internal network of a medical diagnostic facility, including designated diagnostic system;

a service request generating circuit for formulating a service request for addressing an operation of the designated diagnostic system; and

a data communications control system coupled to the internal network and to an external network for transmitting the service request to a remote service provider and for receiving a response to the request from the remote service provider.

26. The system of claim 25, including a remote service provider, the remote service provider receiving the service request, generating the response, and transmitting the response to the data communications control system.

27. The system of claim 26, wherein the control system includes an external network interface for receiving the response via at least two different data communications media.

28. The system of claim 25, wherein the service request is generated at the designated diagnostic system.

29. The system of claim 25, wherein the diagnostic systems include at least two imaging systems of different modalities, and wherein the designated diagnostic system is selected from the at least two imaging systems.

30. The system of claim 25, wherein the operational data useful in responding to the service request is stored at the designated diagnostic system.

31. The system of claim 30, wherein the data communications control system accesses the operational data from the designated diagnostic system via the internal network.

5 32. The system of claim 25, wherein the data communications control system includes an operator interface, and wherein the service request is generated via the operator interface.

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